

Which governor candidates made it?

Brianne Pfannenstiel

Des Moines Register | USA TODAY NETWORK

The candidate filing period has closed and the primary ballot for Iowa's 2026 gubernatorial contest is set as candidates and voters gear up for a competitive contest.

Iowa's governor's race is wide open after incumbent Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds announced she would not seek reelection in 2026.

For the Republican nomination, five candidates have filed paperwork to appear on the party's primary ballot and will be competing in a June 2 election: state Rep. Eddie Andrews, U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra, businessman Zach Lahn, former state Rep. Brad Sherman and former Department of Administrative Services Director Adam Steen.

Auditor Rob Sand is the only Democrat who qualified for the ballot after political strategist Julie Stauch failed to gather the necessary number of signatures.

Iowa governor candidates needed to gather at least 3,500 signatures to appear on the ballot, including at least 100 signatures from 19 counties.

Stauch posted to social media that she fell short of the 100 signatures in two of the 19 counties. She told the Des Moines Register she would not be mounting a third-party challenge.

"That's taking what was a difficult task and making it an impossible task," she said. "I'm accepting this and moving on."

Candidates' paperwork is subject to challenge until 5 p.m. March 20 if other campaigns or citizens spot potential errors.

Pending any challenges, here's a look at the candidates who will be competing for governor in Iowa's 2026 primary elections.

Which Republicans are running for governor?

State Rep. Eddie Andrews

State Rep. Eddie Andrews launched his campaign at a rally in June 2025.

Andrews represents Iowa House District 43 and was reelected to a third term in 2024. His district includes Johnston, as well as parts of Urbandale and Saylorville.

Andrews said he'll run a campaign focused on improving Iowa's education system, combating human trafficking, eliminating property taxes and fighting against the use of eminent domain for carbon capture pipelines.

He said he knows he faces an "uphill battle" in the GOP primary, but he argues he's the most electable candidate in a general election.

"If you look at the general election, it doesn't matter. The Republican leaders lose," he said. "And if you look even further, I do the best. So I think it would be wise for Iowans to look past the primary nomination and see who can actually win the general."

U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra

U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra announced Oct. 28 he would run for governor after forming an exploratory committee earlier in the year.

Feenstra has emphasized repeatedly his ties to Republican President Donald Trump and has promised "to advance the America First agenda in Iowa."



Candidates for Iowa governor are (clockwise from upper left) state Rep. Eddie Andrews, U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra, Zach Lahn, state Auditor Rob Sand, Brad Sherman and Adam Steen.

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On the campaign trail, he says his vision for Iowa rests on four pillars. He said he wants to make Iowa the most business- and agriculture-friendly state in the nation; lower and freeze property taxes; make Iowa education world-class; and improve access to quality health care.

"Every day we're on the campaign trail, hitting every Pizza Ranch," he told reporters as filed his ballot paperwork with the Secretary of State.

"... It's listening to people, listening to Iowans, making sure that I'm earning every single vote."

He said a recent seven-figure advertising blitz is intended to make sure "that everyone knows who I am, what I stand for and what Iowa's going to look like when I become governor."

"We've got to have this vision of making sure that we become the most business and ag friendly state in the country, world-class education, making sure our kids stay right here with great jobs and making sure that we have quality, accessible, affordable health care."

Zach Lahn

Iowa Republican Zach Lahn announced in November 2025 he would run for governor, promising an "Iowa First" agenda.

He said that agenda includes defending family farms by ensuring Iowans own Iowa farmland; fighting against abortion; and "making Iowa healthy again."

Lahn and his wife founded Homeplace Ventures, a company that invests in agriculture, real estate and technology.

The pair also co-founded Wonder, a nontraditional private school in Wichita. Early in his campaign, Lahn donated \$2 million of his own money into his race.

As he filed his paperwork with his wife and children, Lahn said he's excited to get his message out.

"I think it's a different message, it's an outsider message," he said, acknowledging that he's a political novice seeking office for the first time.

"There's been a lot of great rookies throughout the years, in many different sports and in politics. But what I see is that Iowans are maybe getting tired of the typical politics."

Former state Rep. Brad Sherman

Former state Rep. Brad Sherman announced in Feb-

ruary 2025 he would run for governor, even before Reynolds declared she would not seek reelection.

Sherman, a pastor from Williamsburg, was an early Trump endorser ahead of the 2024 GOP presidential caucuses. He has been involved in pastoral leadership and church ministry in Iowa for four decades and has worked with anti-abortion organizations.

Sherman has said he would be a voice for the "foundational principles" of American society, such as putting Christian ideology into public schools.

"Measuring a grassroots movement can be tough, but in my gut, I know we're building something strong," Sherman said in a statement announcing he had filed his paperwork to appear on the ballot.

"Momentum is on our side," he said. "And in just three months, I'm confident I'll be able to say that I am the official Republican nominee for governor of Iowa."

Former Department of Administrative Services Director Adam Steen

Former Department of Administrative Services Director Adam Steen launched his campaign for governor in August 2025 and introduced himself as "a Jesus guy."

Steen is a credentialed minister. He was director of business development at the financial services firm Syverson Stregre, and he owned a senior level management consulting firm called 25 Connections.

He has garnered endorsements from Christian evangelical leaders such as Family Leader President and CEO Bob Vander Plaats and conservative media personality Steve Deace.

Steen filed his paperwork to appear on the ballot surrounded by a throng of supporters and promised his campaign is "gonna put the pedal to the metal" going forward.

He dismissed Feenstra's recent ad campaign, saying, "I've seen some of his ads. It actually makes us look better when he hits a camera."

"We have no fear. I'm not afraid of who says they have more money. We've got momentum, we've got the grassroots, we've got the messaging, we've got the ability to prove we can meet with Iowans. We don't back down from answering questions."

Which Democrats are running for governor?

State Auditor Rob Sand

State Auditor Rob Sand announced in May 2025 he would run for governor. He is the only Democrat elected to statewide office in Iowa.

He has said his goal is to help people across party lines talk to each other again and bring political balance back to the state.

Sand filed what his campaign said was a record-breaking 24,756 signatures to get onto this year's ballot.

He told reporters the numbers represent an "emphasis and proof of momentum" for his campaign.

He said he plans to complete a second 100-town-hall tour later this year after finishing his first as a gubernatorial candidate last fall. He said he's running his own race until Republicans decide on a nominee.

"I think at the end of the day, whoever it is that comes out on the other side is going to be someone who is continuing the direction that Kim Reynolds has been putting the state on, and I think most Iowans are more interested in a new direction," he said.

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The Perry Chief, USPS# 428-260, is published weekly excluding Independence Day, Labor Day, Christmas Day (observed) and New Year's Day (observed) by Gannett Media Corp., 400 Locust St., Ste. 500, Des

Moines, IA 50309. Periodicals postage paid at Des Moines, IA and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2); **NON-POSTAL ONE AND MILITARY FACILITIES:** Please send address corrections to Perry Chief Customer Service, 401 W Main St #600 Louisville KY 40202.

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Circulation: Annual Subscription Rates: In Iowa \$46; Out of state \$50. Six Month Rates: In Iowa \$26; Out of state: \$30. "Easy Pay" option is also available. Please call 515-465-4666. Periodicals postage paid at USPS in Perry, Iowa.

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